

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of conducting a game of chance comprising:
providing each of a plurality of players with at least one opportunity to qualify for play of a bonus game during play of a base game, each player of the plurality of players competing in the bonus game against others of the plurality of players by navigating a player marker on a bonus game field.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
playing the bonus game to a bonus game outcome, wherein the bonus game outcome is determined at least partially by skill or strategy of at least one qualified player of the plurality.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein playing the bonus game to a bonus game outcome comprises positioning the player marker in the same space of the bonus game field as one of a bonus marker, a hazard marker, and an exit marker.
4. The method of claim 3, wherein at least one of the bonus marker, the hazard marker, and the exit marker is at least sometimes invisible in the bonus game.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein providing each of the plurality of players with at least one opportunity to qualify for play of the bonus game comprises at least one of the following events associated with play of the base game:
achieving at least one specific outcome during play of the base game;
achieving an accumulation of specific outcomes during play of the base game;
playing the base game a specific number of times;
playing the base game a plurality of times for a specific duration of time; and
wagering a specific sum over a plurality of plays of the base game.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein providing each of the plurality of players with at least one opportunity to qualify for play of the bonus game comprises providing each of the plurality of players with at least one opportunity to achieve a specific outcome during play of the base game.

7. The method claim 1, further comprising providing each of the plurality of players with an opportunity to eliminate at least one other player of the plurality of players from the bonus game.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein providing each of the plurality of players with the opportunity to eliminate at least one other player of the plurality of players from the bonus game comprises enabling a first player of the plurality to position their player marker on the same space of the bonus game field as that space on which a player marker of a second player of the plurality of players is located.

9. The method of claim 7, wherein, upon being eliminated from the bonus game, the at least one other player is transferred to the base game.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the at least one other player is provided with an opportunity to requalify for the bonus game by achieving at least one specific outcome during play of the base game.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the bonus game field comprises a maze or an open space through which each player marker may be moved.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein the bonus game is electronically implemented.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein the bonus game is physically implemented.

14. The method of claim 3, wherein positioning the player marker in the same space as the bonus marker results in a player receiving a bonus award associated with the bonus marker.

15. The method of claim 14, further comprising:
the bonus award distributing to the player after the player achieves a second specified outcome in the base game.

16. The method of claim 14, wherein the bonus award is selected from the group consisting of a monetary award, a credit award, a play directive award, and a game termination award.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the monetary award comprises at least a portion of a progressive jackpot.

18. The method of claim 15, further comprising exiting the player from the bonus game after distributing the bonus award.

19. The method of claim 15, further comprising permitting the player to attempt to accumulate one or more additional bonus awards after distributing the bonus award.

20. The method of claim 3, wherein positioning the player marker in the same space as the hazard marker at least temporarily impedes a player's movement in the bonus game.

21. The method of claim 3, wherein positioning the player marker in the same space as the exit marker removes the player marker from the bonus game field and terminates a player's play of the bonus game.

22. The method of claim 1, wherein navigating the player marker on the bonus game field is associated with play of the base game.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein the player marker is moved at least one space increment on the bonus game field for each base game play.

24. The method of claim 22, wherein the player marker is moved a plurality of space increments on the bonus game field for each base game play.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein the player marker is moved a plurality of space increments on the bonus game field, the number of space increments correlating with the amount of a wager or speed of play in the base game.

26. The method of claim 1, wherein each of the plurality of players plays the base game and has the opportunity to qualify for the bonus game at a respective plurality of gaming machines.

27. The method of claim 26, wherein play of at least the bonus game by the plurality of players is enabled by networking the respective plurality of gaming machines.

28. The method of claim 27, wherein qualification for enabling play of the bonus game is effected on a networked plurality of gaming machines.

29. The method of claim 26, wherein play of the base game by each of the plurality of players is also effected at the respective plurality of gaming machines.

30. The method of claim 26, wherein play of at least the bonus game by each of the plurality of players is effected at a plurality of mutually remote sites through a communication link.

31. A method of conducting a game of chance, comprising:
effecting play of a base game upon initiation thereof by a player; and
upon an occurrence of at least one qualifying event in the base game, permitting the player to
enter a bonus game played by a plurality of players, each of the plurality of players
having an ability to eliminate at least one other of the plurality of players from the bonus
game.

32. A system for conducting a game of chance, comprising:
a plurality of gaming machines, each configured for play of a base game by a plurality of players
and networked for play of a bonus game, wherein each player of the plurality of players
has an opportunity to qualify to compete in the bonus game against others of the plurality
of players and to eliminate at least one player of the plurality from the bonus game; and
apparatus networked to each of the plurality of gaming machines and configured with the bonus
game for play by the plurality of players.

33. The system of claim 32, wherein each gaming machine of the plurality of gaming
machines is configured to provide a player with an opportunity to enter the bonus game in
association with play of the base game with which that gaming machine is configured.

34. The system of claim 33, wherein each gaming machine of the plurality of gaming
machines is configured to provide a player with the opportunity to enter the bonus game upon
occurrence of at least one of the following events associated with play of the base game with
which that gaming machine is configured:
achieving at least one specific outcome during play of the base game;
achieving an accumulation of specific outcomes during play of the base game;
playing the base game a specific number of times;
playing the base game a plurality of times for a specific duration of time; and
wagering a specific sum over a plurality of plays of the base game.

35. The system of claim 32, wherein the bonus game is configured to comprise a bonus game field through which each of the plurality of players navigates a corresponding player marker.

36. The system of claim 35, wherein the bonus game field comprises a maze or an open space.

37. The system of claim 32, wherein the bonus game is configured to achieve a bonus game outcome determined at least partially by skill or strategy of at least one qualified player.

38. The system of claim 37, wherein the bonus game outcome comprises occupying the same space as one of a bonus marker, a hazard marker, or an exit marker.

39. The system of claim 38, wherein the bonus game is configured to distribute a bonus award associated with the bonus marker when the at least one qualified player occupies the same space as the bonus marker.

40. The system of claim 39, wherein the bonus game is further configured to distribute the bonus award after the at least one qualified player achieves a second specific outcome in the base game.

41. The system of claim 39, wherein the bonus game is further configured to exit the at least one qualified player from the bonus game after the bonus award is distributed.

42. The system of claim 39, wherein the bonus game is further configured to enable the at least one qualified player to accumulate additional bonus awards after the bonus award is distributed.

43. The system of claim 38, wherein the bonus game is further configured to impede movement in the bonus game when the at least one qualified player occupies the same space as the hazard marker.

44. The system of claim 38, wherein the bonus game is further configured to terminate movement in the bonus game when the at least one qualified player occupies the same space as the exit marker.

45. The system of claim 35, wherein the bonus game is further configured to permit a player to navigate a corresponding player marker through the bonus game field, wherein movement of the player marker depends on play of the base game.

46. The system of claim 45, wherein the bonus game is further configured to permit the player to move the corresponding player marker one space increment in the bonus game for each base game play.

47. The system of claim 45, wherein the bonus game is further configured to permit the player to move the corresponding player marker multiple space increments in the bonus game for each base game play.

48. The system of claim 47, wherein the bonus game is further configured to permit the player to move the corresponding player marker multiple space increments in the bonus game based upon the amount of wager or speed of play in the base game.

49. The system of claim 32, wherein the bonus game is further configured to eliminate at least one player of the plurality of players from the bonus game by enabling a marker of a first player of the plurality of players to occupy the same space as a marker of a second player of the plurality of players.

50. The system of claim 49, wherein the bonus game is further configured to eliminate the second player of the plurality of players and transfer the second player of the plurality of players to the base game.

51. The method of claim 49, wherein the bonus game is further configured to permit the second player of the plurality of players to requalify for the bonus game by achieving the at least one specific outcome during play of the base game.

52. The system of claim 32, wherein each of the gaming machines is further configured to enable each play of the base game responsive to a wager placed by a player.

53. The system of claim 32, wherein the apparatus further includes structure to implement the bonus game as a physical embodiment of the maze or the open space.

54. The system of claim 36, wherein the apparatus further includes structure to implement the bonus game as an electronic embodiment of the maze or the open space.

55. The system of claim 36, wherein at least some of the gaming machines of the plurality are configured as a bank of gaming machines at a single location.

56. The system of claim 32, wherein at least some of the gaming machines of the plurality are located at a plurality of mutually remote sites.

57. The system of claim 56, wherein at least some of the mutually remote sites comprise sites other than casinos.

58. The system of claim 32, wherein at least some of the gaming machines of the plurality comprise personal computers, PDAs, or wireless terminals.

59. The system of claim 32, wherein the apparatus comprises a bonus event computer programmed to implement the bonus game.

60. A method for playing a game on a distributed network of game terminals controlled by a central controller comprising:
placing a wager;
operating an underlying base game until a player qualifies for a bonus play mode;
inserting a player marker into a bonus game space after qualifying for the bonus play mode;
sequencing the player marker through the bonus game space as a function of the operation of the underlying base game;
steering the player marker with a directional control device to locate the player marker so as to provide the player a bonus award; and
paying out awards according to a payout schedule for the operation of the underlying base game.

61. The method of claim 60, further comprising:
sequencing the player marker onto the same space occupied by a second player marker; and
causing the second player marker to be exited from the bonus play mode.

62. The method of claim 60, further comprising:
exiting the player marker from the bonus game mode to the regular play mode when the player marker lands on an exit marker.